DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 414 279 SP 037 685

AUTHOR McDiarmid, G. Williamson; Kelly, Philip P.
TITLE Teachers Planning Professional Development in a Reform Context: The Case of Kentucky.
SPONS AGENCY John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Chicago, IL.; Spencer Foundation, Chicago, IL.; Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia, PA.
PUB DATE 1997-03-00
NOTE 53p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 24-28, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Educational Change; Educational Innovation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Participative Decision Making; Principals; Public School Teachers; Public Schools; *Teacher Improvement; Teacher Participation; *Teacher Role; Telephone Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Kentucky; *Kentucky Education Reform Act 1990

ABSTRACT

To examine how Kentucky teachers perceive their needs and how to best meet those needs in the context of systemic reform, researchers examined teachers' plans for their own professional development. Data came from case studies of 21 Kentucky schools that were part of the Professional Development in the Service of Systemic Reform project and a telephone survey of principals and professional development chairs from 77 schools. Input was also sought from the professional development staff at the Kentucky State Department of Education. Questions focused on the planning process, the decision making process, professional development decisions, character of professional development, teachers' reactions, and unintended consequences. The 1995-1996 telephone survey involved analyzing patterns of professional development planning statewide and within the schools. From both data sources, the evidence indicated that teachers were making the decisions about their professional development. Regarding format, of the 623 professional development activities reported, slightly less than half (303) fit the traditional paradigm description. Secondary schools offered more innovation than elementary schools. Half of the activities had an identifiable curriculum focus, with most in three areas (literacy, technology, and mathematics). Findings showed that while Kentucky teachers are in control of planning their own professional development, their decision-making is limited by available time, the accountability system, and prevailing views of professional development. Fifteen charts are attached. (Contains 14 references). (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 414 279

TEACHERS PLANNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A REFORM CONTEXT: THE CASE OF KENTUCKY

A Paper Presented to the
Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association,
Chicago, Illinois, March, 1997

G. Williamson McDiarmid
Institute of Social and Economic Research
University of Alaska-Anchorage
3211 Providence Dr., Anchorage, AK 99508
907-786-7743; afgwm@uaa.alaska.edu

Philip P. Kelly
National Center for Research on Teacher Learning
Michigan State University
116 Erickson Hall
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the MacArthur and Spencer Foundations and the Pew Charitable Trusts. They also acknowledge the contributions of Pam Coe, Tom Corcoran, Jane David, Carolyn Witt Jones, Patty Kanappel, and Bob Sexton -- all members of the Pew-sponsored Professional Development in the Context of Systemic Reform project team. Chris Lubienski and Nancy Schwartz, NCRTL research assistants, contributed substantially to both data collection and analysis. The views and opinions -- as well as the mistakes -- herein are exclusively those of the authors and not of the sponsoring agencies.

S 163785

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. Leask

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

Introduction

Critics of inservice training, advocates of teacher "empowerment," and reformers bent on systemic change all seem to agree that to leverage real change in teaching practice, teachers must take charge of their own professional development (Carnegie, 1986; Goodlad, 1984; National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1996; National Staff Development, 1994; Council, 1995; Tuthill at al., 1987). Such devolution of authority over professional development is urged, in part, by the failure of traditional inservice -- unconnected or loosely connected workshops led by outside consultants -- to produce widespread changes in classroom practice (Holmes Group, 1990). A corollary is that teachers are more committed to activities that they have planned and orchestrated themselves. Currently, most teachers -- two-thirds according to the 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey (Anderson, 1994) -- feel they have little influence over the content of inservice programs in their schools. Finally, devolution of planning authority recognizes that those who are closest to the "action" are likely to understand what is needed better than those at a distance.

The logic that supports devolving decision making about professional development to teachers appears unassailable. Yet, we know little about the decisions teachers actually make about their professional development when given the opportunity. Understanding what these decisions are and how they are reached as well as the ideas and beliefs that underlie them would help policy makers, teachers, and teacher educators design policies and programs that incorporate the resources that support teachers in changing their practices. The research described herein was designed to address these issues.

To examine how teachers perceive their needs and how best to meet those needs in the context of systemic reform, we have been studying teachers' plans for their own professional development. The 1990 Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA) established ambitious learning goals for Kentucky's students and devolved critical decision-making responsibility -- particularly for professional development -- to the school level (The Prichard Committee for

Academic Excellence, 1994; Steffy, 1993). Each school is required to establish a professional development committee (PDC), either one formed specifically for this purpose or the site-based, decision-making (SBDM) school council. These committees control 65% of the funds for professional development -- $23/student for 1995-96. These committees are also responsible for creating, as part of each school's annual Transformation Plan (STP), a professional development plan.

As a basis for the school professional development plan, each PDC must conduct a needs assessment of the faculty. The plan must then define links among the identified needs, the school goals, the objectives of the specific professional development activities, and a process for evaluating the effects of the proposed activities. The plans must also include a description of the activity, a contact person, the resources needed, and sources of funding.

Policy makers in Kentucky and others who have advocated devolving control over professional development to teachers assume that doing so will further the goals of reform (Steffy, 1993). These goals include not only student mastery of challenging information and ideas but the capacity to work with others in identifying problems, collecting pertinent data, and reaching a solution. Yet, whether devolving control over professional development will help teachers make the changes in their teaching practice that such goals seem to require remains to be seen.

Based on the data we have been collecting from teachers and principals over the past two years, we address a series of related questions. First, are Kentucky teachers,in fact, in charge of their own professional development? If, in fact, teachers are in charge, what are the formats and foci of the professional development they are planning? To what extent do teachers' decisions appear to be influenced by the recommendations of various national groups that have called for innovative forms and foci for professional development? Are teachers using their recently acquired power to support action research, study groups, networks, and other instantiations of the principles of professional development the have emerged over the past several years? Or have teachers chosen to stick with the conventional, but much-maligned, inservice paradigm? If so, why?

Methods

Data were drawn from two sources. The first consists of case studies of 21 purposively chosen schools around Kentucky as part of the "Professional Development in the Service of Systemic Reform" project supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The second is a telephone survey of principals and professional development chairs from a stratified random sample of 77 schools whose PDPs we collected and analyzed. The survey sample was chosen from the same five educational regions represented in the purposively sample. This allowed us to determine to what degree the schools in the purposively sample were more broadly representative of schools in the region.

Although we report here primarily on the analysis of the PDPs and the telephone interviews with PDC chairs and principals, we draw extensively on the case study data to provide a context in which to understand the survey data. Consequently, we describe the methods we used in collecting and analyzing the case study as well as survey data.

Samples

Case study sample. Through a process of expert nomination, we identified schools around the state that were thought to exemplify promising professional development practices. In addition, members of the research team had developed substantial background data on four other schools. Collecting additional data on professional development at these schools would allow us to set activities and planning in a the broader context. The total case study sample consists of 21 schools.

Survey. Because of our intention to link the survey study to the case studies, we used the five educational regions in which the case studies were being conducted as the sampling universe for this study. Then, within these regions, we stratified school districts by size. Small districts we defined as those with 10 or fewer schools, medium districts as those with between 10 to 19 schools, and large districts as those with 20 or more schools. After

randomly selecting a sample of districts from each strata, we next chose a random sample of schools from each level -- elementary, middle, and secondary. Knowing we were likely to have difficulty completing data collection at schools because teachers and principals are busy people, we over-sampled by more than 100%. Of the 171 randomly selected schools, we completed data collection at 77 schools.

The final sample of schools included 12% in districts with less than 10 schools, 23% in districts with 10 to 19 schools, and 65% in districts with 20 or more schools (chart 1). Forty-nine percent of the sample were elementary schools while the remaining 51% were almost evenly divided between middle and high schools (chart 2). In addition, because our case study sample was chosen to represent the geographical diversity of the state, the final sample includes schools from all major regions of the state as well as urban and remote rural areas.

Data Collection

Case study sample. In 1995-6, the researchers carried out site visits to all 21 schools in the resulting sample. These were intended to help us get a sense of "the lay of the land" of professional development. At the district office, we interviewed, at a minimum, the superintendent and the professional development coordinator. In most cases, we interviewed others who might be involved with professional development opportunities for teachers. For instance, in some of the larger districts we interviewed the instructional support staff as they are frequently involved in providing professional development support to teachers. The focus of our interviews was on current professional development activities, the professional development planning process, the role of the district office, areas of greatest need, and the role of the school councils. We also asked about the professional development activities of the schools from that district that were in our sample.

At the school level, we interviewed, at a minimum, the principal, the professional development committee chair, a parent member of the school council, and at least one other

teacher. In some schools, we interviewed as many as three teachers. We also made an effort to get around the school, look in classrooms, and talk informally with other teachers. In our formal interviews, we again focused on what professional development activities were going on, what the unmet needs were, how the professional development plan was developed -- including who was involved -- and the respondents' ideas about how teachers learn best.

In addition, we learned more about some of the providers of the professional development opportunities. At the Kentucky Department of Education, we talked both to the director of professional development and to the director of the Alliance School Project because of its role in professional development. We interviewed the individuals in charge of professional development activities both in district offices and in the state as a whole. In addition, we interviewed the directors of two consortia that serve schools in the sample and at least one director of a regional service center.

Both at the district and school levels, we collected documents that we thought might be of use. These included, at a minimum, the professional development plan and the school council minutes. Because many schools have moved to "consolidated planning," we collected their School Transformation Plan which included the plan for professional development.

Survey Sample. After drawing our survey sample, we sent letters to superintendents and principals in the sample districts and schools letters describing the study and asking for their cooperation. Staff at the Partnership for Kentucky Schools, a partner in the research, obtained photocopies of each of the sample school's 1995-6 Professional Development Plan (PDP) either from the regional service centers or directly from the districts or schools. We then analyzed the plans, extracting data to inform our telephone interviews with the principal or professional development chair.

Because we worked from the "official" professional development plan, our sample does not include informal professional development. Nor does it include information on teacher activities as part of "flexible" professional development -- that is, activities by individual teachers on their own.

Telephone Interviews with Survey Sample. We sent to each sample school a cover letter explaining the project, a consent form, a photocopy of the school's PDP, and a list of the interview questions. We followed up the letter with a phone call in which we identified the professional development chair. Although we preferred, whenever possible, to interview the professional development chair, at some schools this proved impossible. If the professional development chair was unavailable, we arranged a time to interview the principal. We began calling in the spring of 1996. Because repeated callbacks were necessary at most schools, we were unable to complete interviews before school ended. As a result, the principal was frequently the only person available who was knowledgeable about professional development activities.

We made a minimum of six callbacks to each school. At some schools, as many as ten calls were necessary to produce a completed interview. Teachers were frequently interrupted during the interviews or had to suspend the interview to deal with a problem. Interviews typically required 45 minutes, although a few, involving several callbacks, lasted for nearly two hours.

Analysis

Case study sample. Researchers used their interview notes to answer questions we used to guide our case studiesl. We analyzed the data from school personnel along several dimensions, including:

- the planning process -- i.e., how needs are determined, how professional development activities are identified, who controls the funding, where is the locus of decision-making;
- the decision-making process -- i.e., what are the roles of the major actors (principal, professional development chair, professional development committee members, teachers, school council), what are the primary influences on decisions, on what basis are decisions made about professional development;

- professional development decisions -- i.e., what drives the decisions, how well do the decisions fit with teachers needs, how much agreement exists around the decisions;
- character of professional development -- i.e., what form does professional development take, what is the focus of professional development, what is the perceived quality of professional development;
- teachers' reactions/response -- i.e., how do teachers respond to the professional development activities, how are the activities evaluated;
- unintended consequences -- i.e., do professional development activities appear to have results that were not intended (for instance, do workshops produce networks of teachers?).

By analyzing our data along these dimensions we were able to compare across schools. Completed cases of individual schools were circulated to all five members of the research team. Each team member then analyzed the cases to identify both patterns and exceptions. Based on these analyses, the researchers developed hypotheses and each of these hypotheses was then tested against the researchers' experience of the schools they had studied.

In addition, the research team presented these hypotheses to two external review "round tables," one consisting of Kentucky researchers involved in studying the impact of the reforms and the other of policy makers involved in professional development. In addition to teachers and administrators, the latter included representatives from the Kentucky Department of Education, the legislature, the Kentucky Education Association, higher education, regional service centers, and administrator associations These forums allowed us to check the credibility of our hypotheses against the understandings of experts.

Survey sample: We conducted two primary types of analysis. The unit of analysis for the first -- and the basis for the data reported here -- was the individual professional development activity at the school level. This analysis allowed us to look at the pattern of professional development planning in the aggregate. Statewide, what are the patterns of professional development activities -- particularly, what trends are identifiable in the format and focus of professional development activities ? The second analysis took as the unit of analysis the school.

For both types of analysis, data were sorted into various categories -- for the content foci of the professional development activities and the format of the activities.

In our analysis of the *format* of professional development activities, we sorted the data into three primary categories. "Traditional paradigm" included activities that have typically characterized inservice education: lectures, lectures accompanied by whole or small group discussions or by hands-on activities, and passive video presentations. "School as learning community" included activities that are integral parts of schools' efforts to improve curriculum, instruction, and communication with parents and that are often overlooked as professional development opportunities: departmental and team discussions, whole-school discussions, small-group discussion involving all faculty, small-group activities that eventuate in a product (curriculum, STP, etc.), whole-school activities that involve working groups (on school-community relations, state assessment test strands, etc.). Finally, "innovative paradigm" described activities that are typically included in recent recommendations for reforming professional development: observations of colleagues' classrooms, intra- and interschool networks, study groups, action research, research-based instruction, professional development schools, and teacher-community networking. Activities that fit none of these three categories included those that were blends of both conventional paradigm and school-as-learning-community, preparation for parent-teacher conferences, individual independent study, conference attendance, and a residual, "catchall" category that included a range of activities (for example, "teachers participated in conferences, workshops, and inservices according to their needs").

We also sorted the data according to the *focus* of the activities. We sorted activities into those that were directly focused on curriculum and those focused on non-curricular issues or programs. Within the curricular category, we further sorted the data according to the subject matter: literacy, math, math and literacy together, science, social studies, physical education, technology, special education, generic curriculum alignment as well as the Different Ways of Knowing program, an elementary social studies program. Non-curricular foci included restructuring, collaboration, the Kentucky Early Learning Profile, SBDM training, administration,

discipline and classroom management, performance assessment, open-ended responses, test-taking skills, and school law. We included state assessment test (KIRIS) analysis in the non-curricular foci although we recognize that this may, in some cases, lead to curricular and instructional discussions. Professional development activities that appeared on the plan but were not complete were categorized as "not done." As we did with the format, we included a "catchall" category for activities that defined our taxonomy.

Limitations

The nature of our sample urges cautions in generalizing the findings. Although the survey sample was randomly selected, three of the eight educational regions in the state were not included in the sampling frame. In addition, we collected no additional data on schools where we were unable to complete the telephone interview. As a consequence, we do not why these schools failed to return phone calls or keep appointments, beyond the obvious observation that teachers are busy people whose first responsibility is to their students, not researchers. Only 2 of the original sample of 171 schools explicitly refused to participate and one of these subsequently joined the study.

Findings

Control Over Professional Development and the Process of Developing Plans

From both data sources -- the case studies as well as the survey -- the evidence is that teachers are making the decisions about their professional development. In neither sample did we encounter more than one or two schools where teachers were not directly involved in making decisions about their professional development. In some smaller independent districts, the district professional development coordinator played a dominant role but even in these cases, teachers made direct input into the process.

The process for generating the professional development plan appeared to be fairly similar across schools. Typically, schools relied on two sources to inform their decisions. One source were various types of teacher needs assessments. These were usually paper-and-pencil surveys (frequently "bubble sheets") that, once completed, were often sent to the school's consortium to be analyzed. The results, in the form of a summary sheet, were then returned to the professional development chair. In some schools, these data were supplemented by the results from needs assessment surveys of the community, sometimes conducted by the professional development coordinator in the district office.

The second source of data for professional development were the results of the state student assessment -- KIRIS. Schools reported that when they received their assessment results in the fall, the teachers "analyzed" them to identify the school's weaknesses, although what they meant by "analyze" is not clear. Then, the professional development chair, principal, or, in small districts, the district professional development coordinator identified providers that they believed would address these weaknesses. Information about providers seemed to come from local educators, educators in other schools, or the professional development coordinator. The professional development opportunities themselves tended to be workshops that can be delivered after school, on weekends, or during the summer.

The Format of Professional Development

As chart 3 demonstrates, of the 623 individual professional development activities reported by the 77 schools in our sample, just under half (303) fit the "traditional paradigm" description -- that is, lectures, presentations or videotapes, alone or accompanied by discussions or small-group activities. "School as learning community" describes another 17% of the activities while 10% of the 623 activities qualified as "innovative paradigm" activities. We assigned 24% of the activities to various residual categories.

Presentations followed by activities for teachers accounted for over half the professional development categorized as "traditional paradigm" (chart 4). Another quarter of

the activities in this category were presentations dominated by lecture with little or no accompanying discussion while 12% were presentations with discussions.

Discussions that involved the entire faculty were the most frequently mentioned professional development activity in the "school-as-learning-community" category (chart 5). Other activities in this category included department or team discussions (23% of the 105 activities in this category), small-group activities that eventuate in a product (18%), all faculty in working groups (17%), and small-group discussions involving all faculty (11%).

The 62 activities we categorized as "innovative paradigm" represented a range (chart 6). Twenty study groups -- 32% of the activities in this category -- constituted the most common activity. Various types of networks -- intra- and interschool and school-community -- totaled 27 or 43% of the innovative paradigm activities. None of the other types of innovative paradigm activities were reported more than twice. Nine activities struck us as admixtures of traditional and innovative paradigm professional development. For example, one activity included "a lecture, interactive training, and mentoring of other school staff in developing effective instructional strategies."

The significant number of activities that we assigned to the "catchall" category reflects our caution in designating a given activity as belonging to a particular category even after the interviews (chart 3). Often times, we discovered that a particular activity actually involved several options and our informants had little or no reliable information about how teachers distributed themselves across the options.

Because we asked only about formal PD, the 4% of plans that included conference attendance does not reflect the extent to which teachers attend professional conferences. Many teachers -- especially at the secondary level -- attend such conferences not as part of their school's formal and "official" professional development (i.e., the required 24 hours) but rather as part of their individual professional education.

In sum, approximately half of the formal professional development in the 77 schools in our sample fits the conventional image of inservice education: Presentations by either local or outside experts, sometimes accompanied by teacher discussions or tasks. Twenty-seven percent

of the remaining activities can be described as either "school as learning community" or "innovative paradigm." Thus, although more traditional inservice activities appear to be most common, other forms of professional education are far from rare.

Professional Development Paradigm by Level Of School

We had anticipated we would find that elementary schools would more readily embrace innovative forms of professional development than would high schools. A central tenet of recommendations to improve professional development is that it be school-wide. Elementary schools, lacking the departmental structure of secondary schools, lend themselves more readily to school-wide professional development. We were surprised, therefore, when we analyzed activities by school level, that the secondary schools in our sample were more likely to report "innovative" professional development than elementary schools (chart 7). Of the 164 activities reported by high schools in our sample, we categorized 12% as "innovative." We categorized as "innovative" 13% of the 146 activities reported by middle schools (chart 8). Nine of the total of 20 teacher study groups in our sample were reported by high schools.

In contrast, we categorized only 7% of the activities reported by elementary schools as "innovative;" 55% fit the description of "traditional paradigm" (chart 9). The distribution of activities across the three categories -- traditional, school as learning community, and innovative -- reported by middle schools was similar to that for the sample as a whole (chart 10).

The Foci of Professional Development

We assigned activities to one of three broad categories: activities that had a identifiable curricular focus, those focused on non-curricular issues or topics, and individualized professional development activities (chart 11). Half of the activities had an identifiable curriculum focus whereas 40% had a non-curricular focus. For 2% of the activities, we had difficulty determining from the descriptions we were given by schools whether or not these activities were genuinely

focused on curricular areas. Rather than risk overstating the proportion of curriculum-focused activities, we assigned these in a residual category.

Among the 311 activities that had identifiable curricular foci, 70, or 23%, addressed literacy issues (chart 12). Given the general importance of reading and the specific pertinence of writing portfolios to the KIRIS assessment, these results are unsurprising. When we examined these data more closely, we found that 45, or 64%, of the literacy activities focused specifically and exclusively on writing portfolios (Chart 13).

"Curricular alignment" was the second most often reported curricular focus, representing 17% of the activities in this category. From our case studies, we know that in some secondary schools, "curricular alignment" means teachers meeting as subject-matter departments to decide at which level each of the topics in the state's Core Content will be covered. Technology was the third most commonly reported curricular focus, accounting for 16% of the activities, math was fourth at 12% (chart 12). Among the remaining curricular foci, 11% of the activities were reported to focus on special education, 8% on science, 2% on physical education, 2% on activities that combined literacy and math, and a mere 1% -- that is, 3 activities out of a total of 311 -- focused on social studies. Finally, 14 activities, or 5% of the total, were identified as part of the Different Ways of Knowing (DWoK) program. Because many DWoK activities have a strong social studies focus, adding these would raise the social studies total to 6% -- or the equivalent of science.

Of the 623 professional development activities, we categorized 252 has having non-curricular foci (chart 14). Eighteen percent of these activities focused on restructuring. Twelve percent addressed classroom management and discipline whereas 6% focused on collaboration in the school. These four categories accounted for 36% of all non-curricular activities. Others included assessment (8%), Kentucky Early Learning Program (7%), administrative issues (6%), site-based decision-making (5%), KIRIS analysis (5%), parent-teacher conferences (5%), and school law (3%).

Discussion

The data leave little doubt that Kentucky teachers are truly in control of planning their own professional development. At the same time, the teachers operate within a decision-making "space" that is bounded by a number of factors, some policy-related and others cultural.

Time Available

Currently, required professional development is limited to 4 days. Prior to 1996-7, districts had the option of using up to 5 instructional days for additional PD. A temporary arrangement established by the legislature to support teachers in tackling the new challenges that the KERA presented, this option expired at the end of the 1995-6 school year. Both the state and the districts claim portions of the required time, mandating particular professional development -- blood-borne pathogens, confidentiality, beginning-of-the-year meetingss, portfolio scoring workshops, etc. As a consequence, school professional development committees often have control over no more than 6 to 12 hours.

The Accountability System

In addition, in almost all of the schools in both the case study and survey samples, professional development activities are being driven by KIRIS results supplemented in some schools by teacher surveys. Teachers are understandably preoccupied with the accountability dimension of KIRIS. Whether they are rewarded or sanctioned depends largely on their assessment results. This is just as the architects of the reforms intended: Decision-making would be pushed down to the school-level but, in return, schools were to be held publicly accountable for achieving their assessment goals. As a consequence, the decisions teachers make about professional development are based largely on their desire to raise students' test scores.

Whether or not such an arrangement is considered as a positive development depends, in part, on one's view of the assessment system. Those who favor the open-ended response items, writing portfolios, and, until recently, performance events see the "assessment-driven" character of most professional development as an improvement over what existed before. In addition, the close connection between assessment results and the accountability system motivates teachers to pay particular attention to student learning as measured by KIRIS. As noted above, virtually all schools identified KIRIS scores as a primary basis for decision-making. Linking teachers' professional development to evidence on student learning is precisely the alignment that advocacy groups such as the National Commission of Teaching and America's Future (1996) and the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1996) have recommended.

Most teachers we have interviewed concur: Because teachers are making the decisions, they plan professional development that is, in the main, focused on helping them prepare their pupils for the assessment. Most schools reported that they analyzed these scores to identify weaknesses. Professional development that addresses immediate classroom issues and problems that teachers face is, for them, the very definition of relevant.

Prevailing Views of Professional Development

Teachers -- as well as others -- are accustomed to equating professional development with stand-alone, short-term workshops with little follow up (Holmes, 1990). This is what most have experienced in schools. Few teachers in the sample schools had experienced, in the context of formal professional development, "innovative paradigm" activities -- study groups, action research, teacher networks, and so on. In planning, most teachers know that presentation and workshop formats are familiar and acceptable to their colleagues and to others -- administrators, parents, students, community members. Deviating from the typical and expected is risky in a high-stakes environment such as currently exists in Kentucky schools. This is true in spite of attempts by the Kentucky Department of Education to broaden the definition of what is

acceptable professional development.

In addition, the challenge that teachers have faced during the first six years of KERA was to interpret what the reformers wanted and to institute the numerous elements of the reform -- new student assessments, site-based decision-making, ungraded primary and accompanying systems of record-keeping, self-determined professional development, and so on (Steffy, 1993). Teachers needed, foremostly, information about the reforms and the new expectations they entailed. Conventional workshops are widely used means for communicating information to large groups. Consequently, we should be surprised if presentations and workshops were not the dominate formats.

As analysis of the data indicated, half of all activities had a distinct curricular focus and most were in three areas: literacy, technology, and mathematics. Teachers' unfamiliarity with assembling and evaluating the writing portfolios that constitute a major element of the assessment explains why more professional development focused on portfolios than any other curricular element. Technology is a major strand in KERA and an area in which most teachers had little experience at the beginning of the reform. Finally, results from the first assessment showed that mathematics was a weakness in many schools.

When we looked more closely at the content of these curricular-focused activities, we found that they most often they addressed how to prepare pupils for the assessment (chart 15). Rarely did they focus directly on teachers' understanding of the topics and procedures they were to help their pupils learn. Again, this is understandable in the context of the accountability system: Teachers sought to learn how best to prepare pupils to respond to test elements that were unfamiliar.

Teachers may, however, learn about the subjects they teach from opportunities whose focus seems purely procedural. Firestone and Pennel (1995), in their study of professional development for the writing portfolios instituted in Vermont, found that as teachers evaluated writing samples using prescribed rubrics, they had to articulate and explain their understandings of the elements of good writing. Similar research remains to be carried out on professional development in other school subject areas.

Conclusion

As a result of KERA, Kentucky teachers have gained decision-making authority over their own professional development. Such authority does not, however, automatically translate into activities that conform to the quality indicators proposed by various advocacy groups (McDiarmid, 1995; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; National Foundation for the Improvement of Education , 1996; National Staff Development Council, 1994). A heavy reform "load" and a high-stakes accountability system have produced an environment in which teachers define and meet their professional development needs in less ambitious, more traditional forms. Despite the fact that professional development seldom fits the images suggested by reformers or even the ways teachers say they prefer to learn, Kentucky teachers think current professional development is an improvement over what existed before the reforms (Daniel and Stallion, 1995).

Traditional professional development practice appears to persist in most Kentucky schools for several reason. Given the reach and scope of the reforms, teachers have needed access to extensive information, information readily available through presentations and workshops. Providers of professional development, teachers, and other stakeholders share an image of professional development as stand-alone, short-term presentations or workshops that target specific information or procedures teachers needed to meet their obligations to their pupils to prepare them for the KIRIS assessment as well as to institute other elements of the reforms such as ungraded primary. In addition, teachers may be reluctant to adopt innovative approaches or ideas until they have some sense that the new is an improvement on the old. Finally, not all teachers share reformers' aversion to one-shot workshops. They have learned and continue to learn from presentations and workshops, despite the calumny currently heaped on these formats.

Perhaps focusing criticism on "one-shot workshops" as symptomatic of the problem with traditional professional development distracts us from other issues. The issue may be less the format of individual professional development activities and more the broader view of

professional development at a given school. Workshops and presentations may work well within a diversified portfolio of activities designed to achieve longer-term instructional and curricular goals. It is noteworthy that over a quarter of the professional development activities that schools, in a high-stakes environment such as that in Kentucky, reported were either "innovative paradigm" or exemplified "schools as learning communities." This finding may be read to indicate that teachers are both trying out innovative forms of professional development and attempting to integrate professional development more fully into the quotidian life of the school.

The impetus to move toward professional development that is more genuinely a part of teacher-led efforts to improve curriculum and instruction at the school level may come from the accountability system itself. The rise in student assessment results that teachers in most schools have realized over the past four years may be levelling out (Kentucky Department of Education, 1996). Score increases to this point may represent the boost possible through teaching students better test-taking skills -- how to respond to open-ended questions, what to include in a portfolio, and so on. If scores do clearly plateau in the next assessment cycle, teachers may well look for innovative ways to enhance their own knowledge and skills to help improve their pupils' KIRIS scores.

One direction in which they may look appeared in our interviews. When we asked teachers how they learned best, they usually described experiences that were distinctly different from the formal professional development activities in which they had been recently involved. A veteran elementary teacher spoke wistfully of her experience from several years before when she worked with her colleagues on the ungraded primary program:

> We had a faculty that dived into [ungraded] primary so that the district was catching up to us. . . . . One day we met as a faculty and had a six-hour professional development and talked about how we could restructure our school day and align our curriculum. . . . . It was just us and we could do things and make decisions together and it was, bar none, the best professional development ever. It was us as a faculty

> making decisions and as a faculty we never have time to do that [now]. Every year, one day of professional development should be just the faculty.

Virtually all the teachers with whom we spoke prefer experiences that feature a chance to talk with colleagues about issues and problems they face in common, daily. For learning new ideas and practices, they prefer to see new ideas in action, try them out in the classroom, talk about what they experience with other teachers trying out the same or similar ideas, return to their classrooms to refine their first effort, and so on. In other words, they prefer experiences that are collegial, specific, iterative, long-term, and experimental -- professional development that is distinctly different from that most Kentucky teachers are currently experiencing.

In their study of state-sponsored teacher networks, Firestone and Pennell (1995) conclude that professional development that is closely tied to specific policies may not produce the same "capacity-building" results as does professional development that is focused more on enhancing teachers' fundamental understanding of the subjects they teach and how to teach them. Yet, in Kentucky, although professional development appears closely tied to policy, teachers may be learning skills and habits of mind that have value beyond the specific policies that drive current professional development activities. Learning how to use results from assessments of student learning as a basis for identifying professional development needs has application in many policy contexts and, in the view of reformers, is a key to improving instruction (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1996; National Staff Development Council, 1994). In short, although Kentucky teachers may still be experiencing "traditional paradigm" professional development, they may be developing some of the very skills and dispositions reformers at the national level are urging on teachers and schools.

References

Anderson, J. (1994). Who's in charge? Teachers' views of control over school policy and classroom practice. (Research report). Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Carnegie Corp. of New York. (1986). A nation prepared: Teachers for the 21st century. New York: Author.

Daniel, P.L. & Stallion, B.K. (1995). The implementation of school-based professional development. Bowling Green, KY: Western Kentucky University, Kentucky Institute

Firestone, W.A., and Pennell, J.R. (1995). Designing state-run teacher networks: A comparison of two cases. New Brunswick, NJ: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Goodlad, J. I. (1984). A place called school. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Holmes Group. (1990). Tomorrow's schools: Principles for the design of professional development schools. East Lansing, MI: Author.

Kentucky Department of Education. (1996). Kentucky school and district accountability results: Accountability cycle 2 (1992-93 to 1995-96). Frankfort, KY: Author.

McDiarmid, G. W. (1995). Realizing new learning for all: A framework for the professional development of Kentucky teachers (Special Report). E. Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996). What matters most: Teaching for America's future. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.

National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1996). Teachers take charge of their learning. Washington, D.C.: Author.

National Staff Development Council. (1994). Standards for Staff Development: Middle Level Edition. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

Tuthill, D., Seidel, S., & McClure, R. (1987). An ecological and school specific model of student and teacher empowerment: The N.E.A.'s Mastery-in-Learning Project. Paper presented at the American.Educational Research Association Annual Convention, Washington, DC.

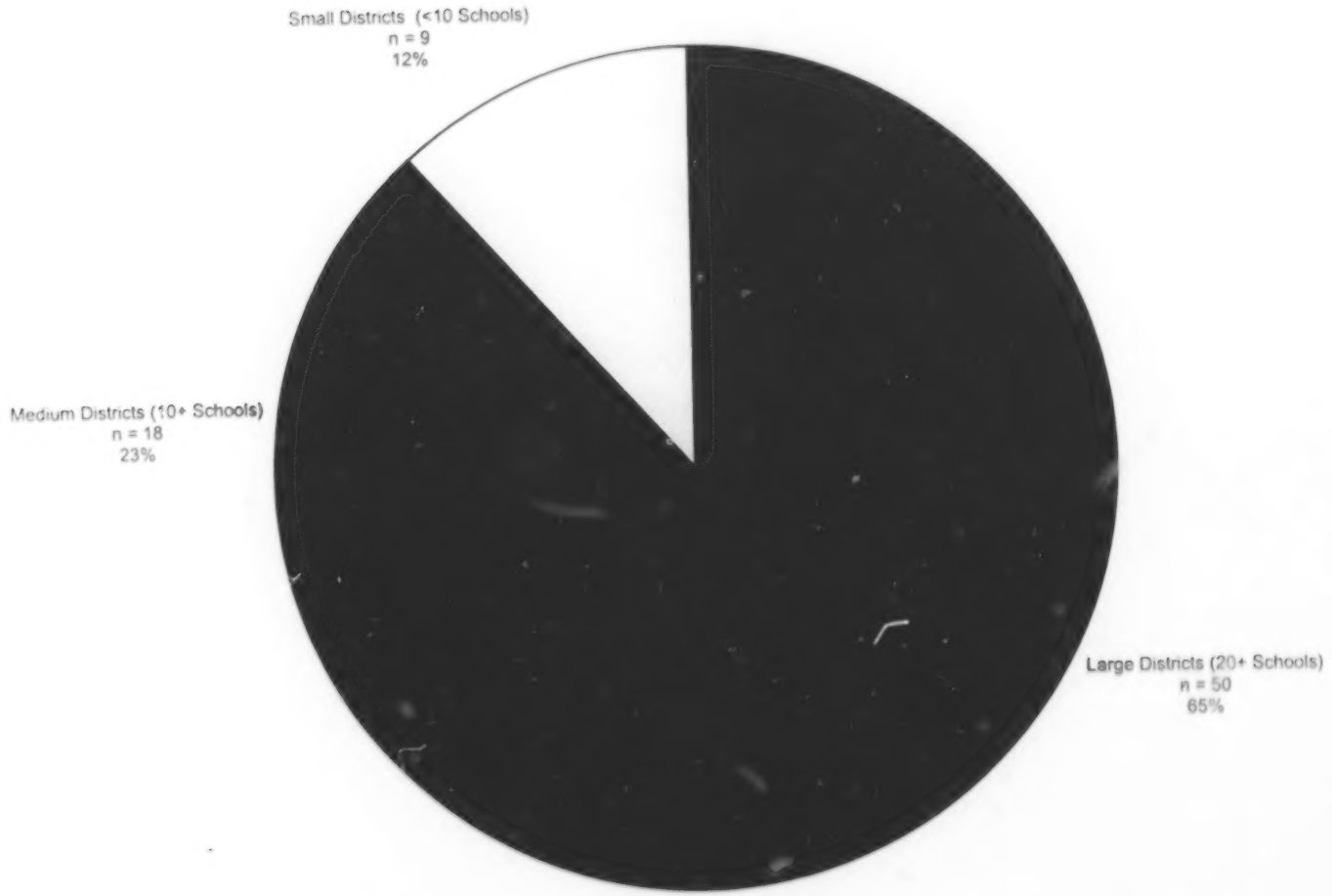
Steffy, B. (1993). The Kentucky Education Reform: Lessons for America. Lancaster, PA:

Technomic.

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. (1994). Learner outcomes for Kentucky's six leaning goals . Lexington, KY: The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

Chart 1

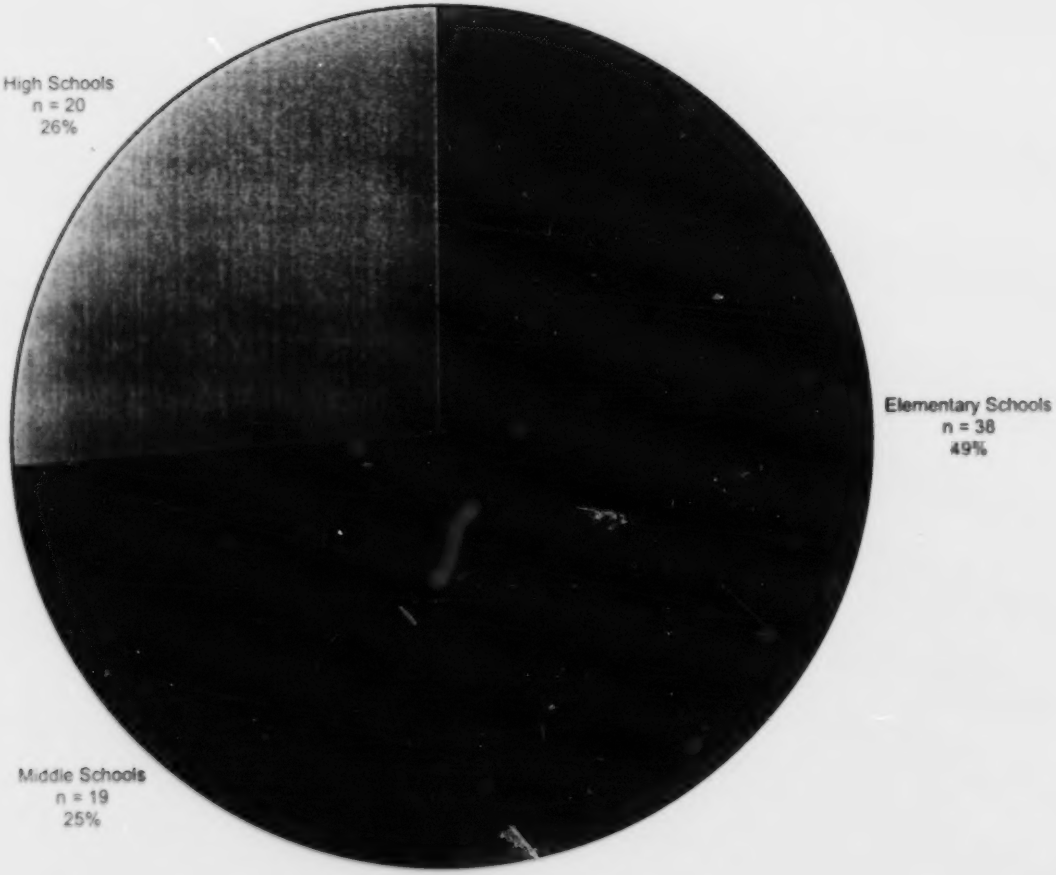
Distribution of Schools by District Size
n = 77

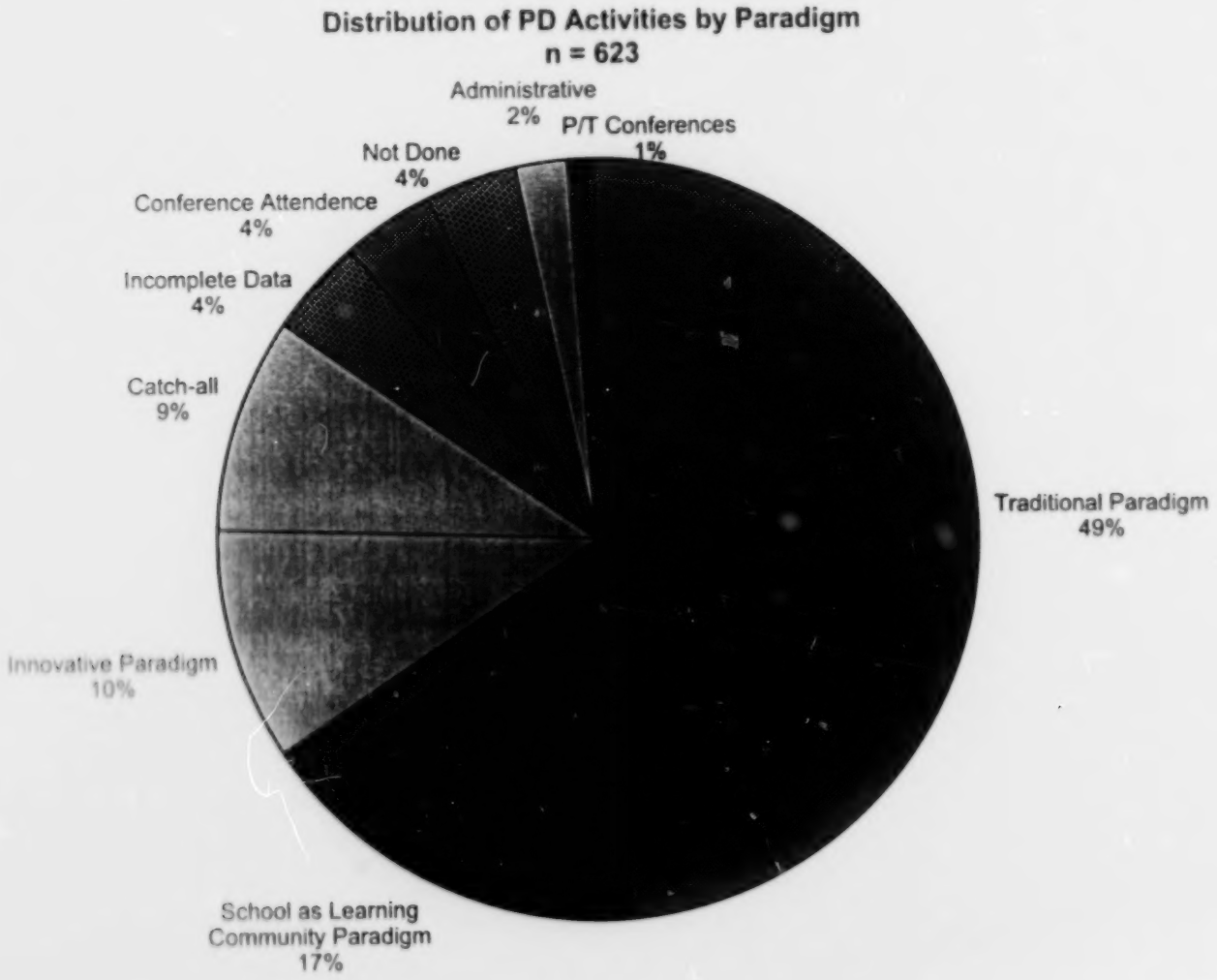


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

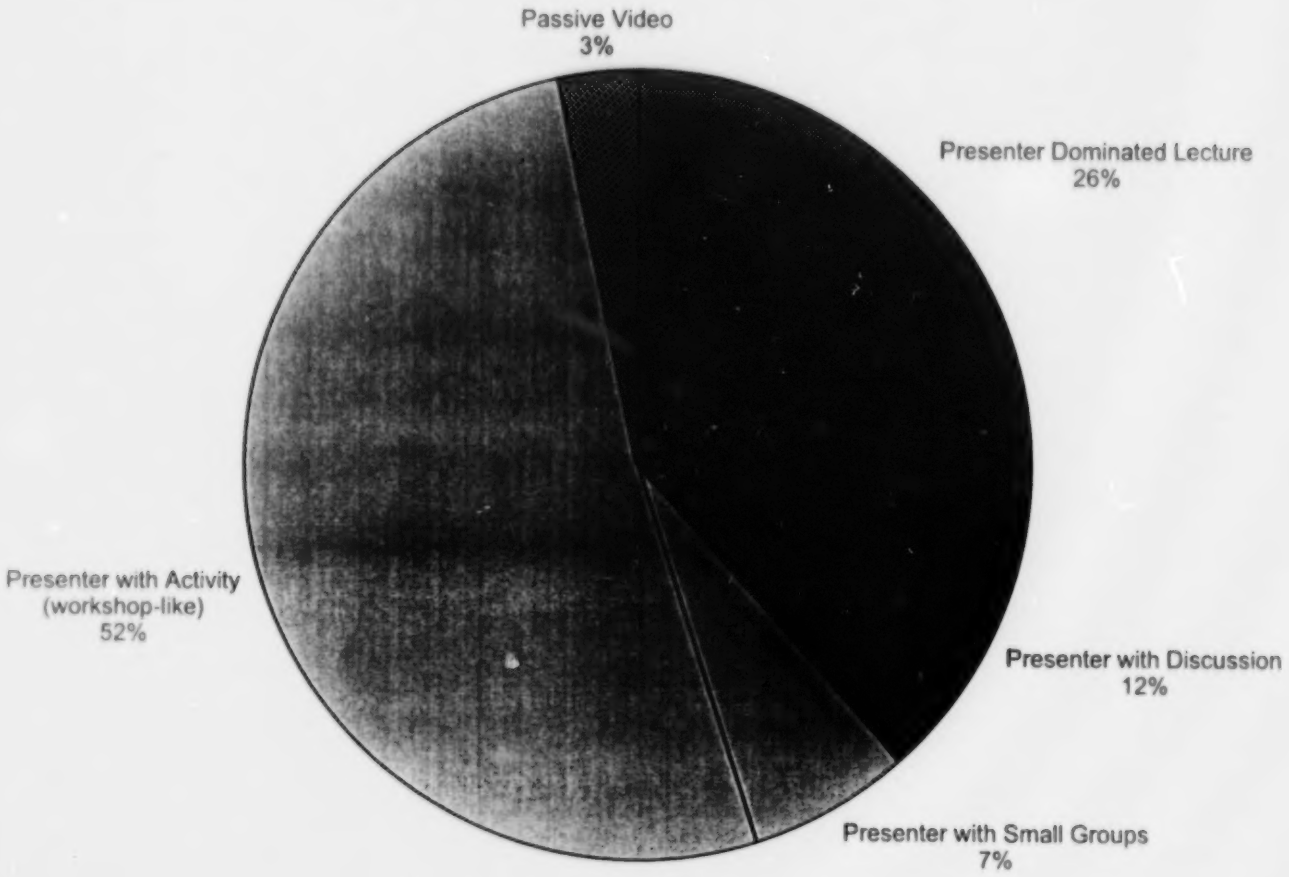
Chart 2

Distribution of Schools by Level
n = 77

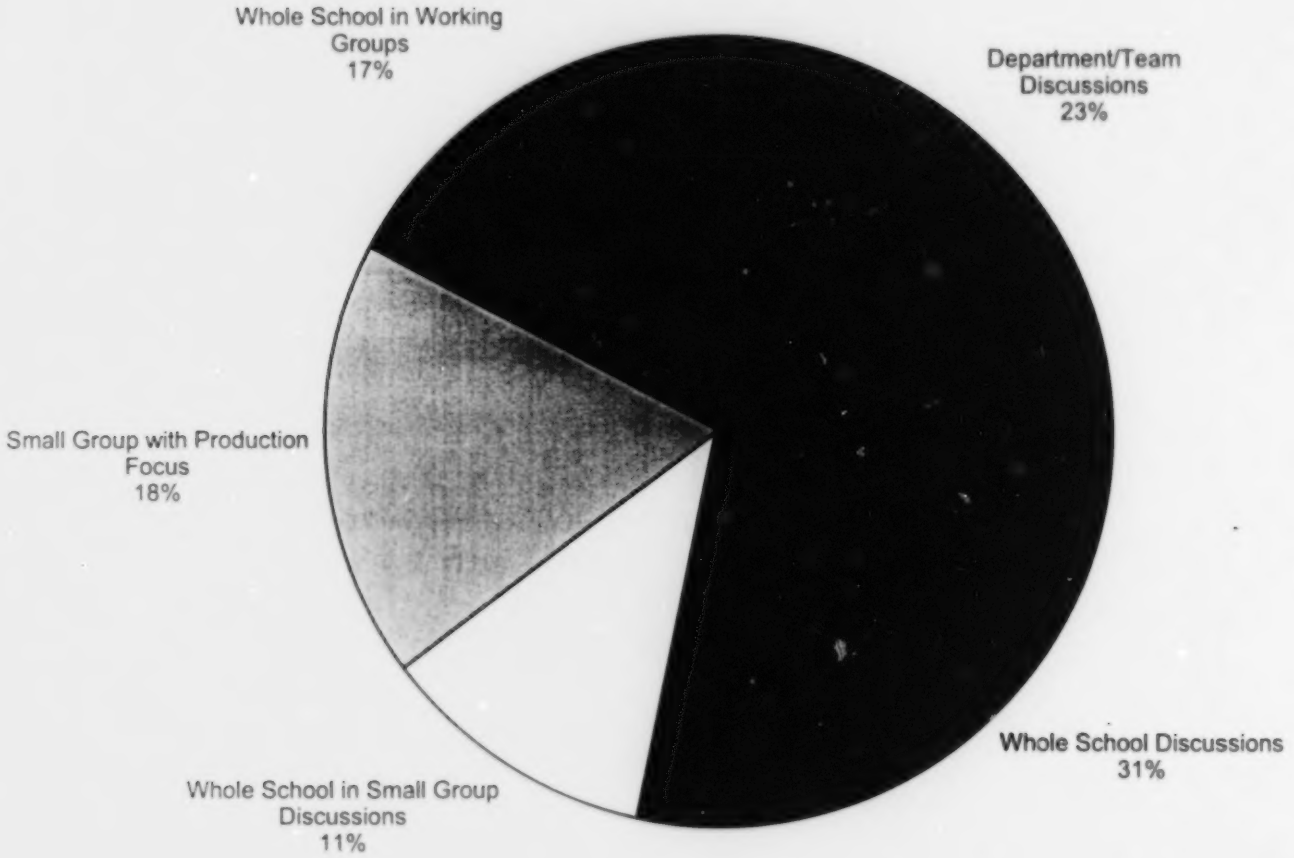



Distribution of PD Activities by Paradigm
n = 623
Administrative
2%
P/T Conferences
1%
Not Done
4%
Conference Attendence
4%
Incomplete Data
4%
Catch-all
9%
Traditional Paradigm
49%
Innovative Paradigm
10%
School as Learning
Community Paradigm
17%

Formats of PD Activities in Traditional Paradigm
n = 303



Format of PD Activities in School as Learning Community Paradigm
n = 105



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Chart 6

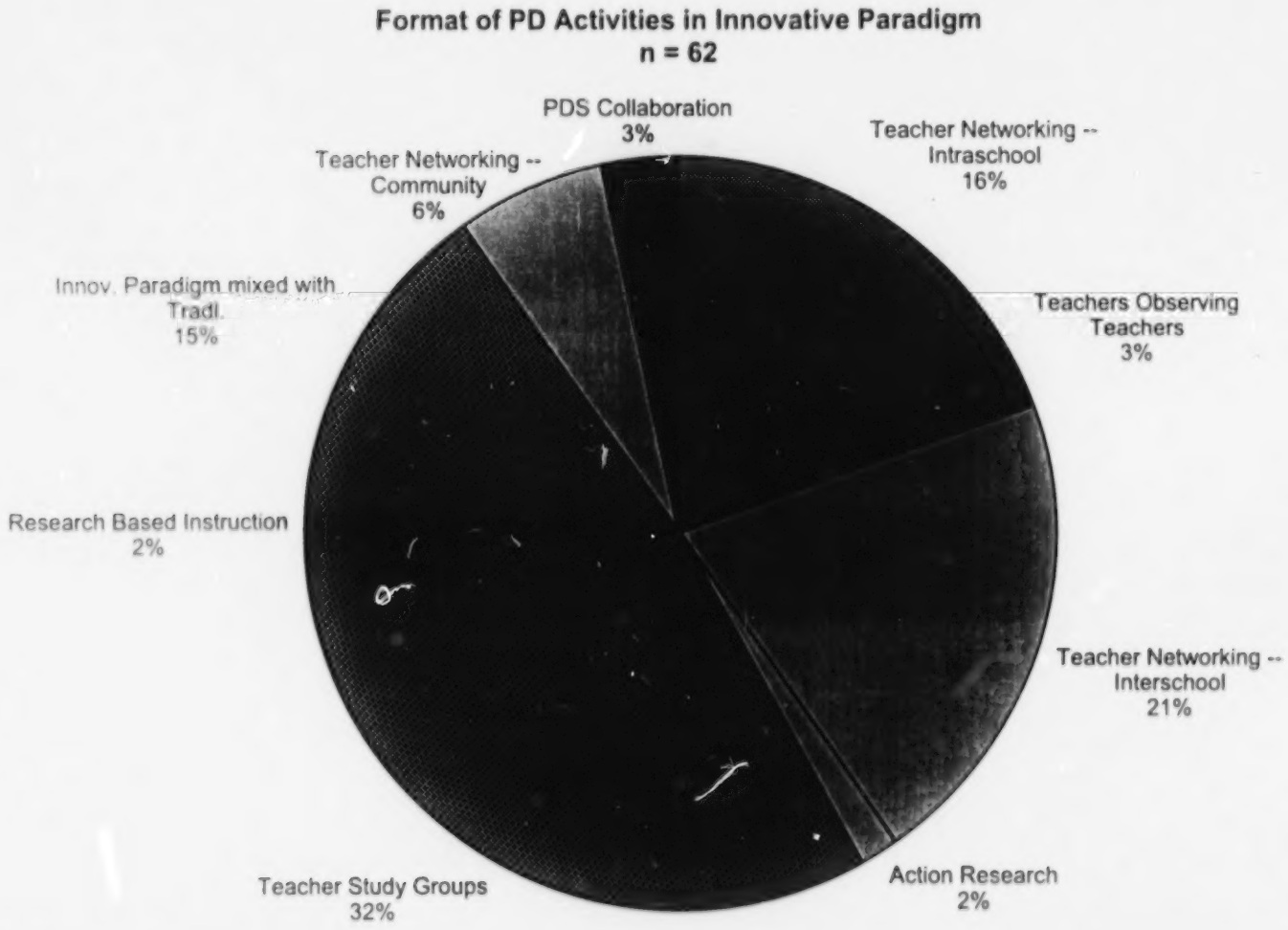
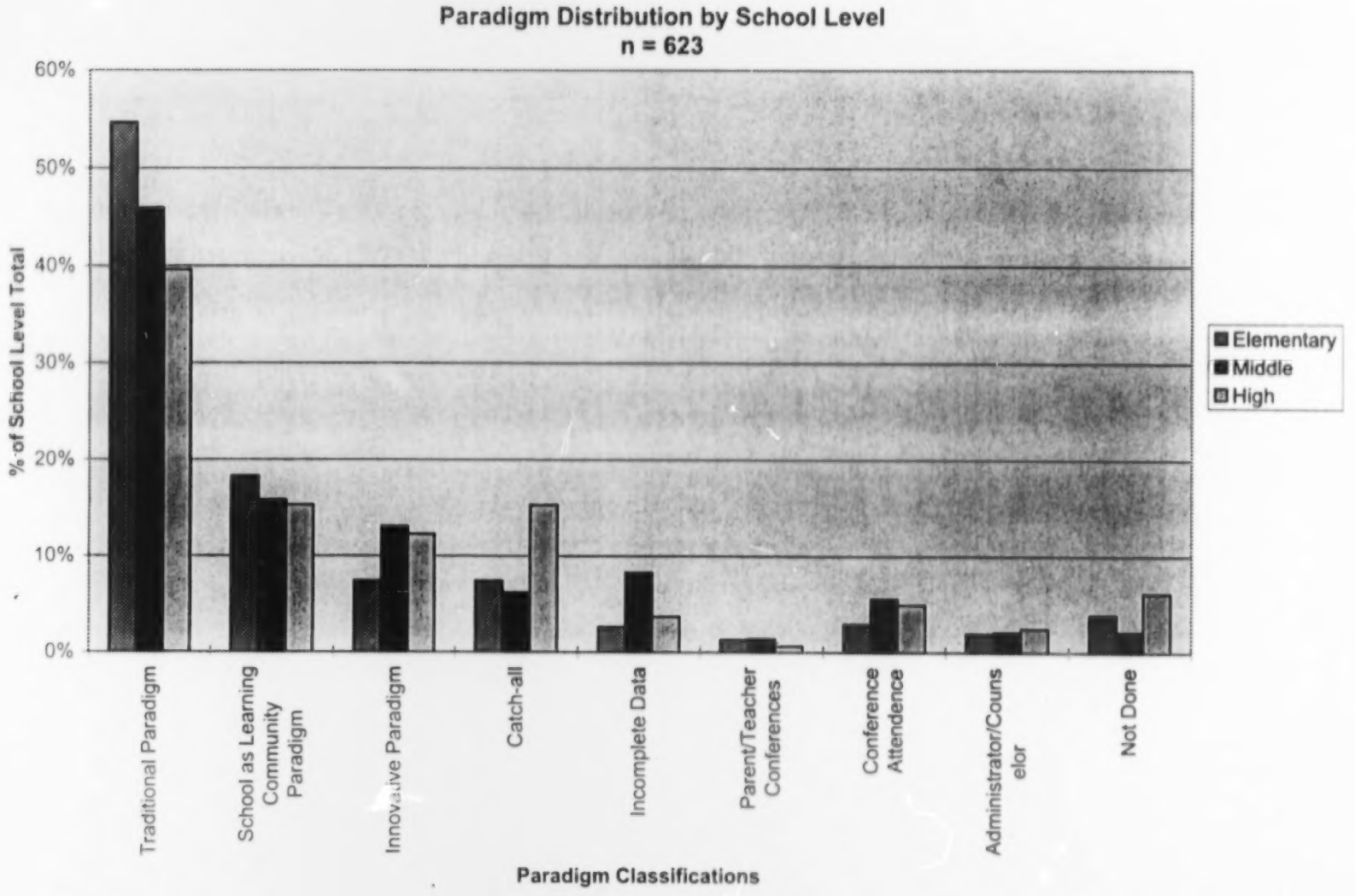
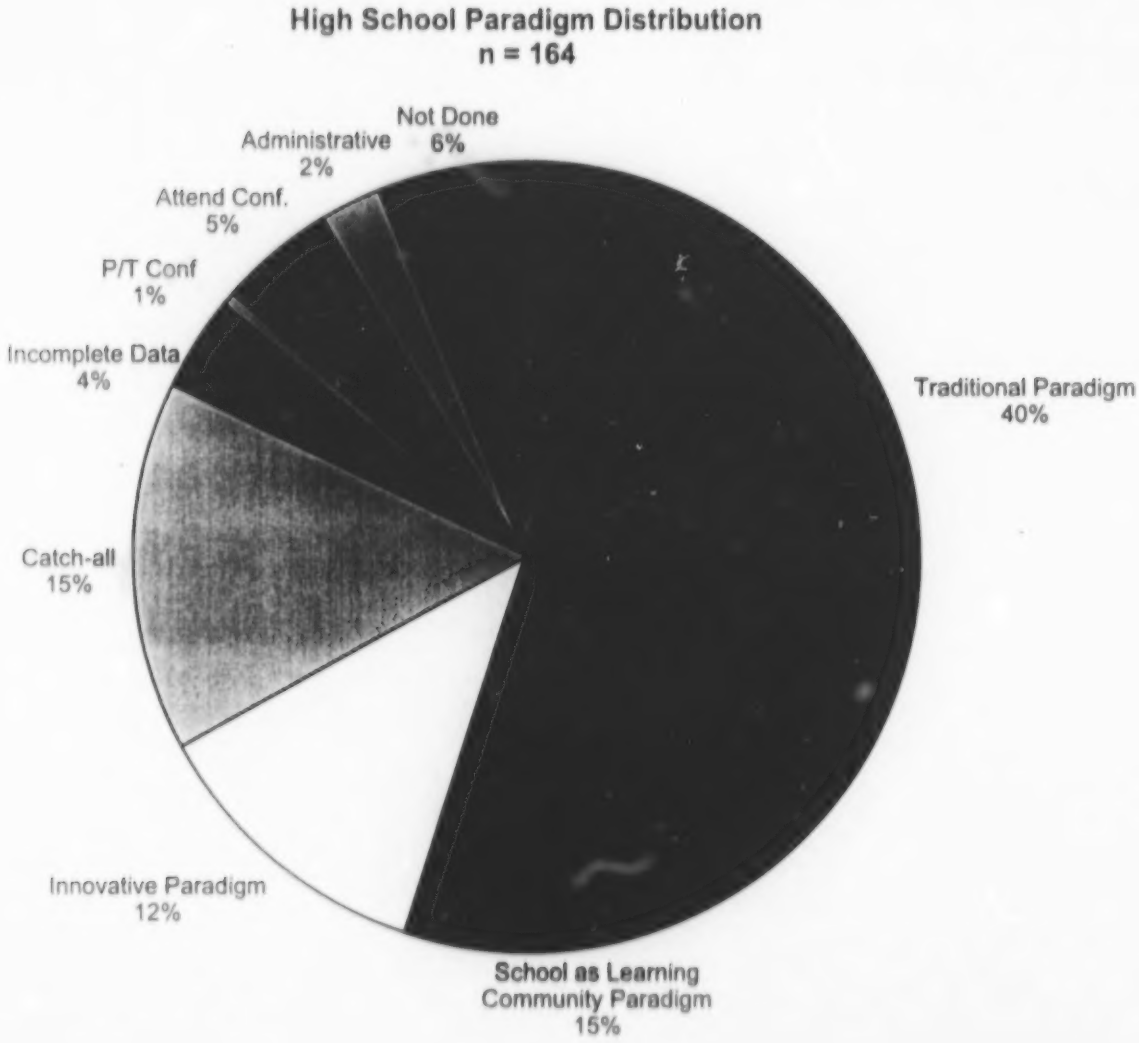

Format of PD Activities in Innovative Paradigm
n = 62
PDS Collaboration
3%
Teacher Networking -- Intraschool
16%
Teacher Networking -- Community
6%
Innov. Paradigm mixed with Tradl.
15%
Teachers Observing Teachers
3%
Research Based Instruction
2%
Teacher Networking -- Interschool
21%
Teacher Study Groups
32%
Action Research
2%

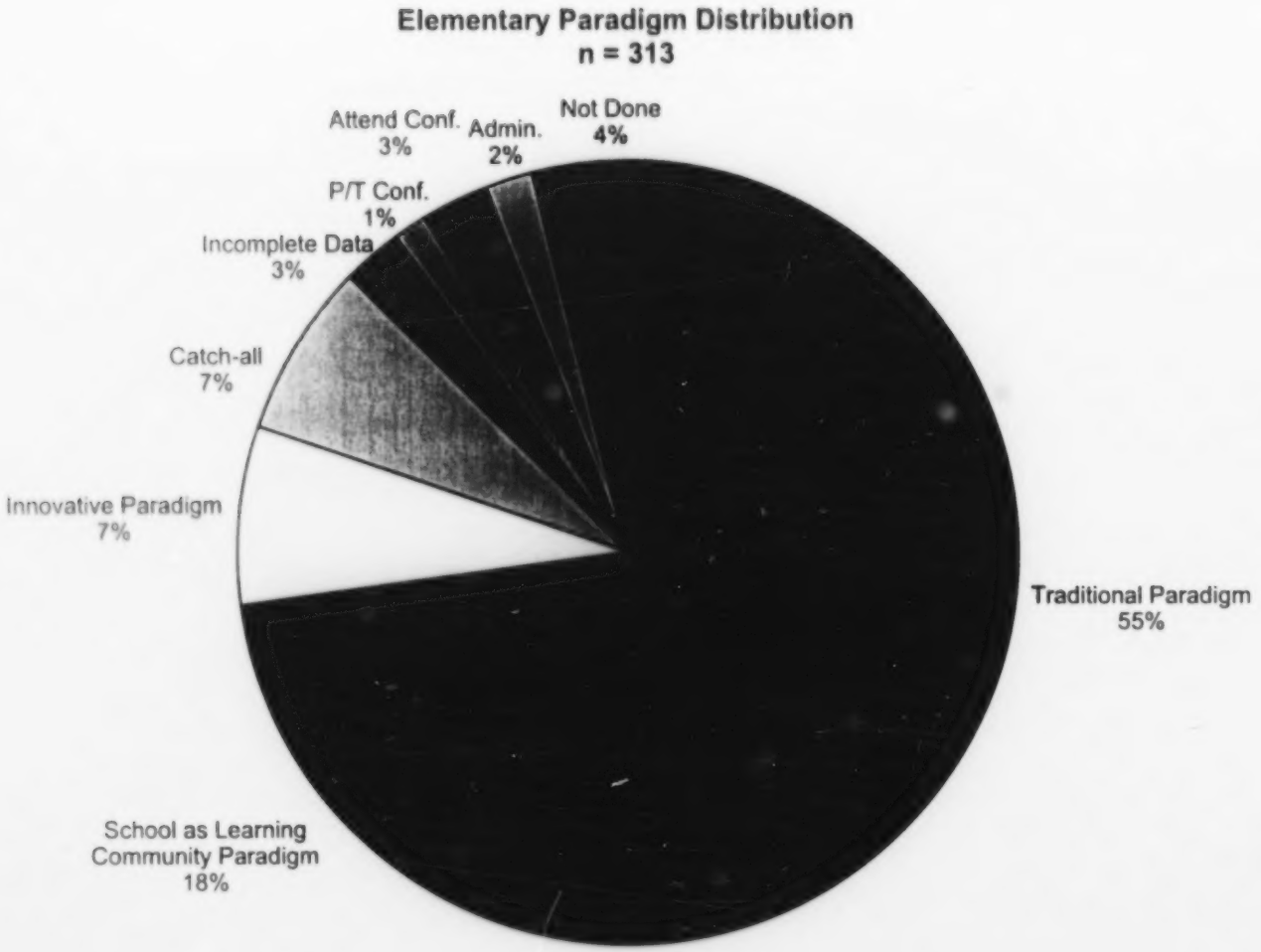
Chart 7



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Chart 8


High School Paradigm Distribution
n = 164
Not Done
6%
Administrative
2%
Attend Conf.
5%
P/T Conf
1%
Incomplete Data
4%
Traditional Paradigm
40%
Catch-all
15%
Innovative Paradigm
12%
School as Learning
Community Paradigm
15%


Elementary Paradigm Distribution
n = 313
Attend Conf.
3%
Admin.
2%
Not Done
4%
P/T Conf.
1%
Incomplete Data
3%
Catch-all
7%
Innovative Paradigm
7%
Traditional Paradigm
55%
School as Learning
Community Paradigm
18%

Middie School Paradigm Distribution
n = 146

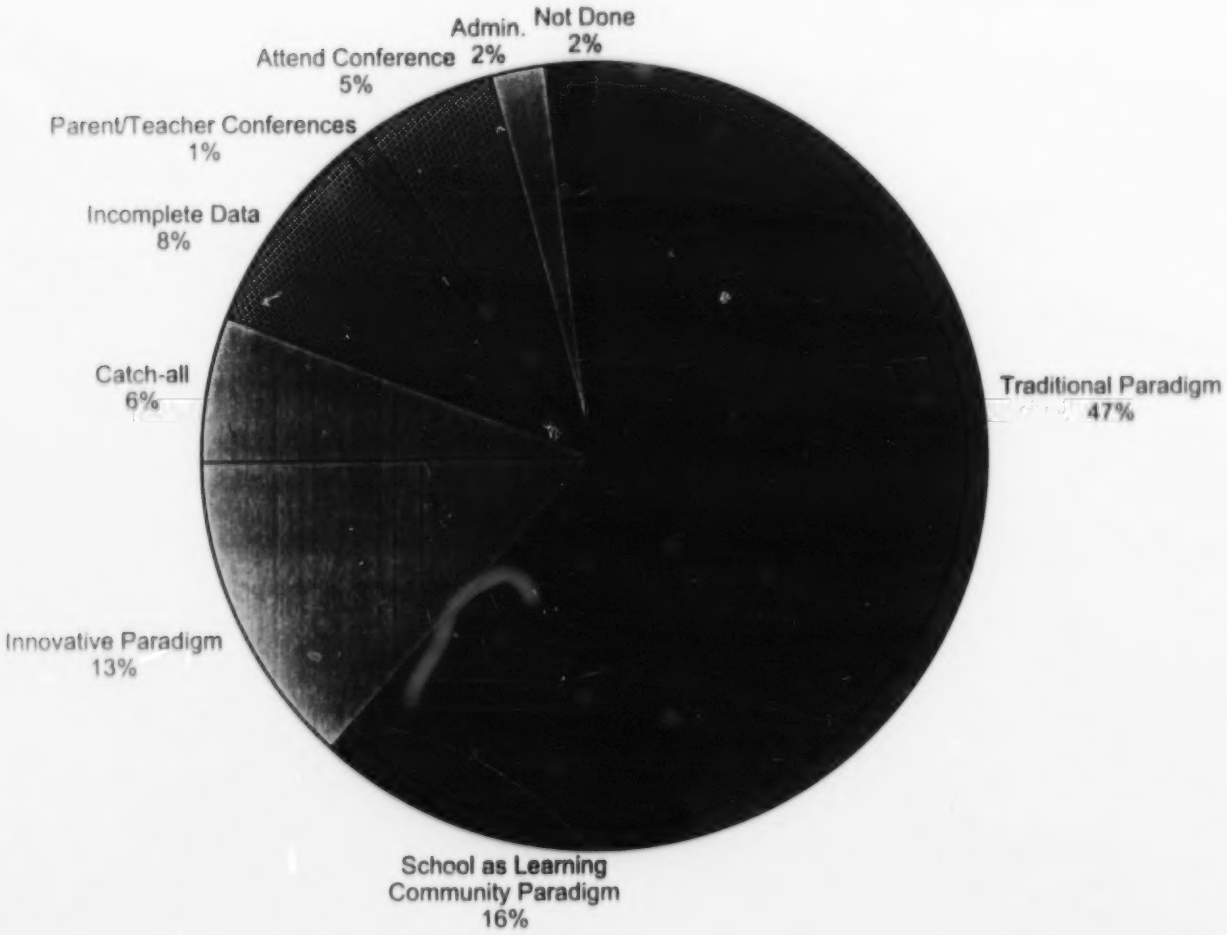
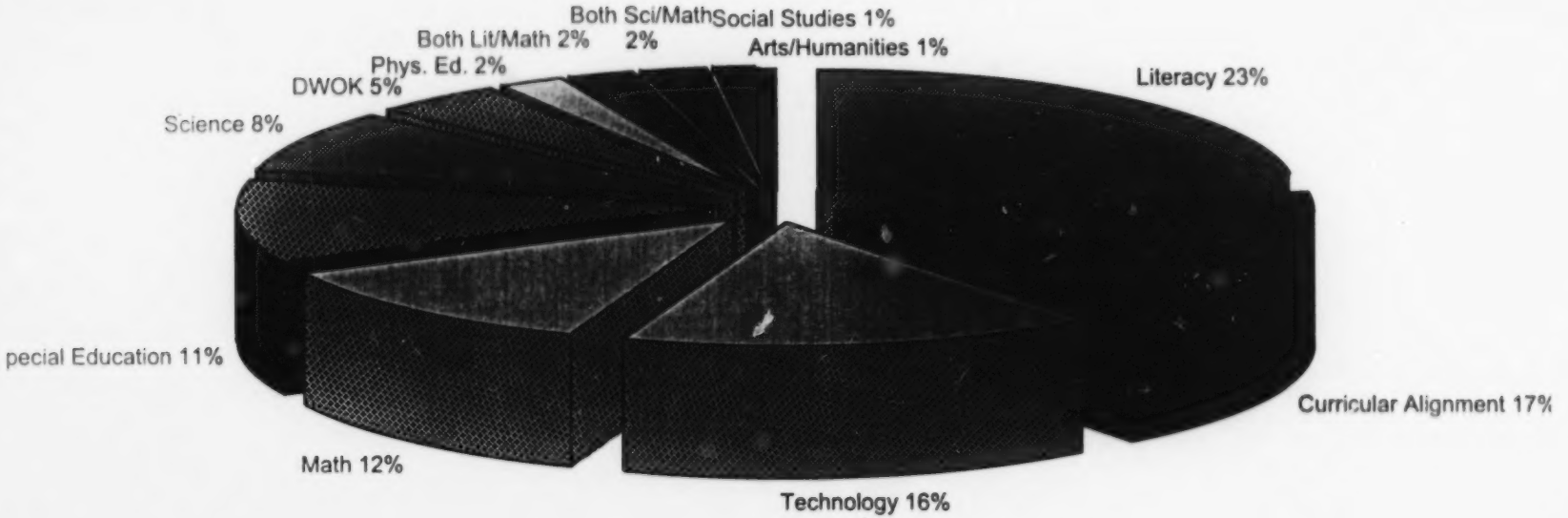


Chart 11

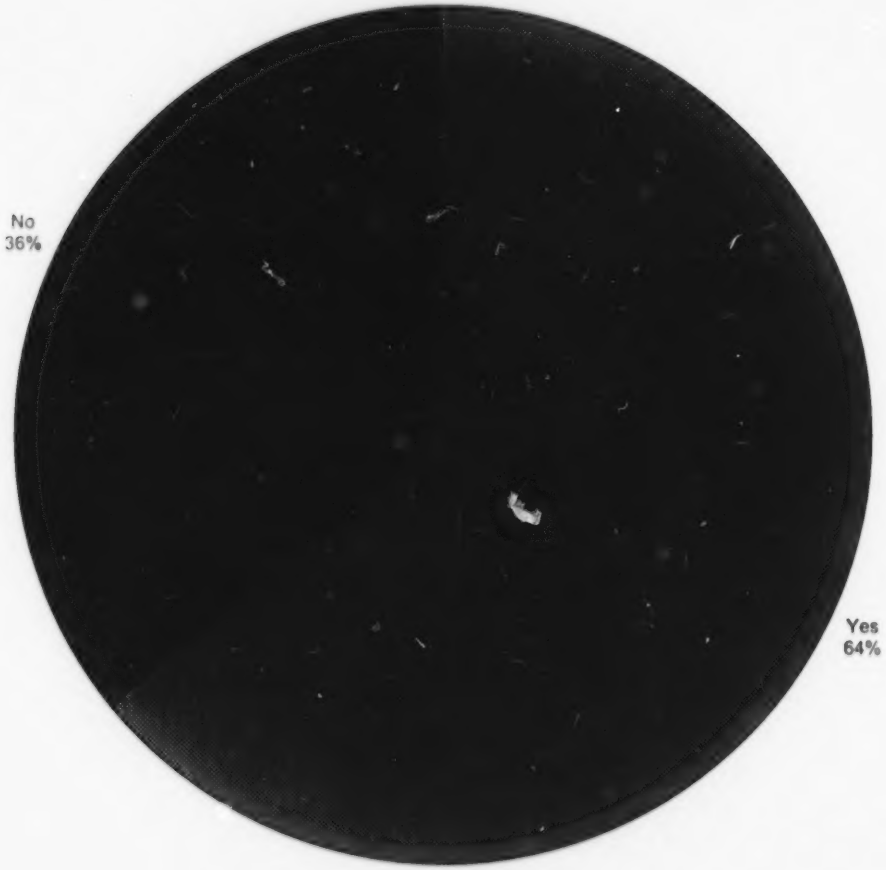
Distribution of PD Activities by Curricular Foci
n = 623

Chart 12

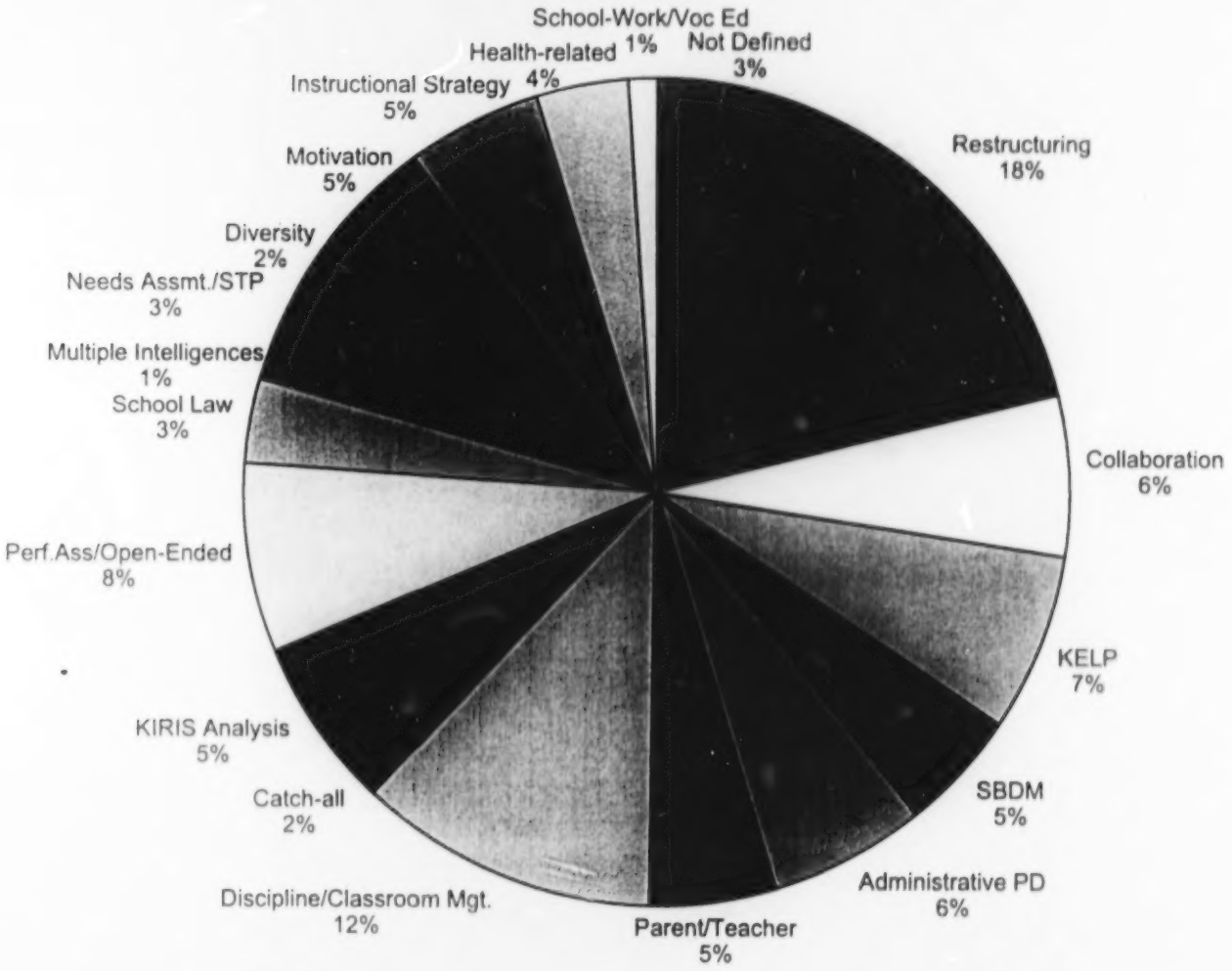
Distribution of PD Activities with Curricular Foci
n = 311



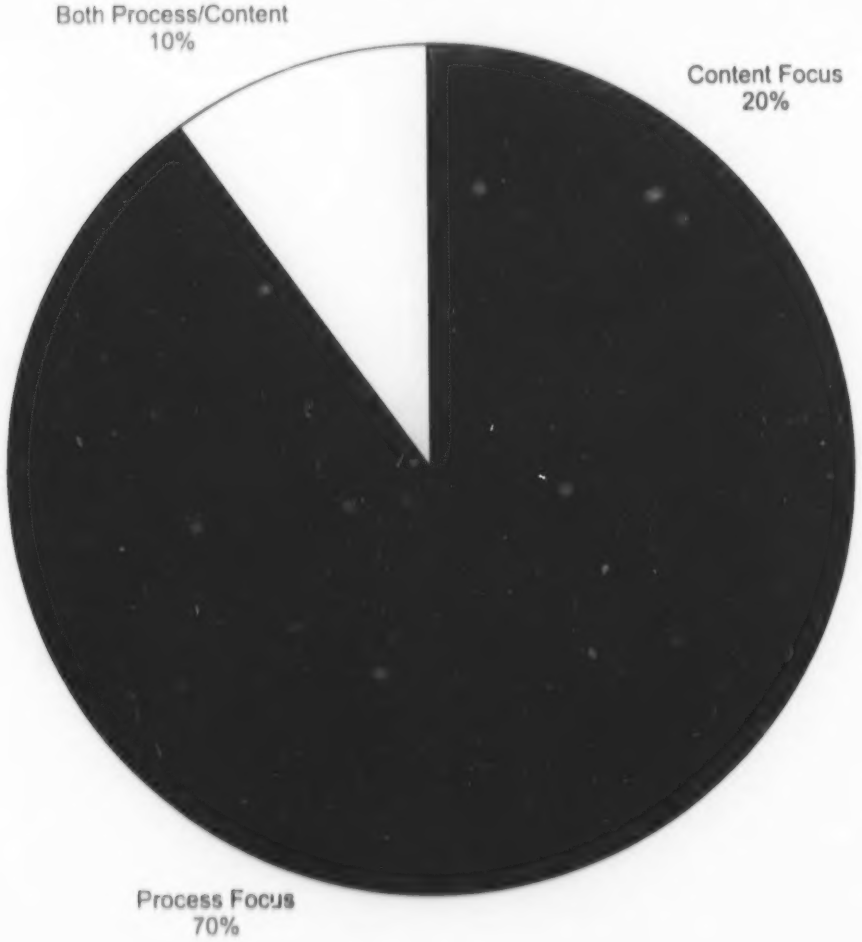
Literacy Activities (Portfolio Focus?)
n = 70



Distribution of PD Activities with Non-Curricular Foci
n = 252



Distribution of Foci for Literacy Activities
n = 70



BEST COPY AVAILABLE